

Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Buffalo, New York

Connecting for life

Visitors to Rowell Park Cancer Institute's (RPCI) website are greeted by the motto: *Connecting for life.*

These three words speak volumes about the cancer center. This simple statement embodies RPCI's mission to provide the highest quality patient care; to conduct research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of cancer; and to educate the public and the next generation of those who study and treat cancer.

Founded in 1898, RPCI was one of the first—and remains the only upstate New York facility—to be designated as a National Cancer Institute (NCI) comprehensive cancer center. RPCI is also a charter member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), setting national standards for cancer care.

Located on a 25-acre campus in downtown Buffalo, New York, RPCI comprises about 1.5 million square feet of space. Since 1998, nearly 60 percent of RPCI facilities had been renovated or newly constructed, including the completion of a new hospital building and the Center for Genetics and Pharmacology. Today, RPCI employs more than 2,700 staff, including approximately 250 physicians and scientists and more than 450 nurses.

Connecting to Patients

Connecting to patients occurs on many levels at RPCI. "We believe that the patient is why we are here. Whether it's basic research, directly caring for patients or even working on the administration and finances, our goal is to cure cancer and to take care of patients," said RPCI Medical Director Judy Smith, MD.

Disease-site-specific, multidisciplinary care teams tailor treatment plans to individual patients. "We have a collaborative team of physicians who work together as a single



Advocating a patient-centered approach to cancer care, Judy Smith, MD, medical director, RPCI, connects with patients and volunteers in RPCI's Community Cancer Resource Center.

Vital Statistics

- Total hospital bed size: 101
- Number of outpatient visits: 153,000*
- Funded Research Projects: 455
- Grants/Contracts: \$75.8 million
- Academic Affiliation: State University of New York at Buffalo

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group practice. The Institute is a united group of faculty and staff, and we all work with a single mission and vision," said Dr. Smith. These multidisciplinary teams, which con-

sist of medical oncologists, surgical oncologists, pathologists, nurses, case managers, and social workers, meet weekly to discuss cases. They review each patient's pathology, laboratory, and radiology tests. Psychosocial needs are discussed, along with any co-existing medical conditions. The teams also consider both standard NCCN-compliant and investigational therapies. After consultation with the patient, an individual treatment plan is then determined.

This personalized approach ensures a quality experience for the patient from diagnosis through follow-up care. In both inpatient and outpatient surveys, patients have consistently rated their satisfaction with the care received at levels above 95 percent.

Care Pages is one more example of RPCI's innovative efforts in "connecting for life." *Care Pages* is a web-based program that helps patients who are undergoing active treatment update friends and family

on their progress. Patients are also connected to their healthcare team by email. And, RPCI stays connected with its patients after treatment through initiatives such as the long-established pediatric cancer survivorship program.

Connecting to the Community

“As an NCI-designated cancer center, we make a significant effort to reach out to community oncologists and community cancer centers and establish network agreements which promote guidelines-based therapy, offer collaborative second opinions, and provide access to clinical trials to interested patients receiving cancer care in the community,” said Dr. Smith.

Connecting with 20 other leading cancer centers as a charter NCCN member, RPCI has played an integral part in setting national standards for patient care delivery, according to Dr. Smith. “In almost every area, Roswell Park has been a leader in terms of these guidelines,” she said.

Through its membership in the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) and through participation in ACCC national meetings, RPCI staff continues to reach out to connect with community oncology providers nationwide.

RPCI’s affiliate members include Cayuga Medical Center in Ithaca, N.Y.; Rochester General Hospital in Rochester, N.Y.; and Bradford Regional Medical Center in Bradford, Pa. By facilitating access to clinical trials and advanced therapies and technologies, the quality and breadth of cancer care services in these regions are enhanced.

Advancing Cancer Research

Over the past decade, RPCI has increased its research support, including federal grants and contracts as well as commercial sponsorship and donations, by \$60 million, Smith said.

RPCI has been among NCI’s top

grantees for several years and was recently ranked 37th by NCI in terms of grants among more than 2,000 academic and medical institutions.

RPCI efforts focus on both basic science and translational research with the overriding concept of personalizing cancer treatment. RPCI developed the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test for detecting

lence in Bioinformatics and Life Science and the Hauptman-Woodward Medical Research Institute. The RPCI facility will be home to more than 200 staff and include 60 primary investigators. “This has allowed us to take our pre-existing collaborations and locate them physically within the same space or adjacent space ... [and will

Leading-Edge Technology: Evaluation and Implementation

RPCI provides the most advanced cancer technology, including image-guided radiation therapy, GammaKnife®, intraoperative MRI, nanotechnology, robotic and minimally invasive surgery, and state-of-the-art endoscopy equipment (with magnification colonoscopy and upper endoscopy, and LIFE bronchoscopy).



be] better able to integrate ideas, meetings, and interactions between the faculties,” said Dr. Smith.

In the ongoing effort to accelerate the development of new products and novel therapies, Roswell Park recently announced the formation of a life sciences spin-off company, PersonaDX and the relocation of Cleveland BioLabs to the campus.

and managing prostate cancer and pioneered photodynamic therapy (PDT), a revolutionary therapy that combines light-sensitive drugs with laser light to destroy cancer cells.

RPCI’s recent notable achievements include:

- *Lung cancer registry.* This international registry comprises 11 different research institutions. Registry data are being used to initiate studies that may answer treatment-based issues and critical questions related to diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer.
- *Cancer vaccines.*
- *Novel strategies to target lymphocytes.*
- *New immunotherapies that use the immune system to fight cancer.*
- *Tissue biorepository database.*

In 2006, RPCI opened the new \$74 million Center for Genetics and Pharmacology, which fortified its research collaborations with researchers at the adjacent University at Buffalo’s newly constructed New York State Center of Excel-

Connecting for Education and Prevention

With a broad educational mission, RPCI has trained many of the nation’s leaders in surgical oncology, medical oncology, and radiation oncology. The Institute through its strong alliances with the University at Buffalo and other regional universities provides comprehensive, quality education to residents, fellows, high school, college, and graduate students.

One major initiative at RPCI has been the creation of the nation’s first genetic biorepository database. With more than 3,000 samples of genetic materials from patients, researchers have the opportunity to design studies to address such issues as how diet, smoking, and lifestyle impact genetic predisposition to, and eventual development of, malignancies.

Each day at RPCI, dedicated staff are “connecting for life” to advance research, education, and the care of patients with cancer. For more information, visit the Roswell Park website at www.roswellpark.org. 